



ASMFC

Fisheries *focus*

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Gordon C. Colvin Receives Prestigious David H. Hart Award

On November 3, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) proudly recognized the enormous commitment of Gordon C. Colvin, Director of Marine Resources for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, to the conservation and management of Atlantic coast fisheries. The award was presented at the Commission's 58th Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut.

In presenting the award, Commission Executive Director John H. Dunnigan expressed his admiration of Mr. Colvin by stating, "Truly, Gordon Colvin represents all of the qualities of outstanding leadership that we honor today."

Mr. Colvin's contributions to and influence in the Commission, and fisheries conservation and management in general are many. He chaired the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board, while at the same time chairing the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Demersal Species Committee. His leadership especially regarding summer flounder is one of the chief reasons that this stock is well on the road to becoming rebuilt. Under Mr. Colvin's direction both the Board and the Committee were able to make the difficult decisions necessary to initiate the very restrictive, and not always popular, measures necessary to rebuild the depleted stock of fluke, as well as make some tough choices on what to do in the same fishery management plan for scup and black sea bass.

In 1994, Mr. Colvin was elected Commission Chair. It was during his two-year term as Chair that Mr. Colvin's vision and insight into the needs of fisheries management were truly seen through the successes of Boards and Committees such as the Legislative, Quota Management, and Cooperative Fishery Statistics. Not only was he able to assist in the effort to implement the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management

Act but, perhaps more importantly, he created and encouraged the activities of the Cooperative Fisheries Statistics Committee that led to the adoption of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP). He now serves as Chair of the ACCSP Coordinating Council.

Mr. Colvin's service to the fisheries management community did

not stop with the completion of his Commission Chairmanship. He is now the Chair of the American Lobster Management Board, and the challenges and problems facing this fishery will no doubt benefit from Mr. Colvin's increasing role. He also continues to contribute greatly to other fisheries management programs of the Commission, the Council, and the State of New York for striped bass, sea herring, tautog, and weakfish.



1999 Hart Award Recipient Gordon C. Colvin (second in from the right) stands with his award and fellow New Yorkers (from the left) Brian Culhane, Senator Owen Johnson (ASMFC Commissioner), and Patrick Augustine (ASMFC Commissioner).

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The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

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Upcoming Meetings

11/27 - 12/1:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina.

11/29 - 12/3:

Northeast Stock Assessment Workshop/Stock Assessment Review Committee, National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Science Center, Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

11/30 - 12/1:

First Biennial Conference on the Biology of Tautog & Cunner, Best Western Sovereign Hotel, Mystic, Connecticut. For more information, contact Eric Schultz at (860) 486-4692 or eschultz@uconnvm.uconn.edu

12/5 - 8:

National Symposium on Catch and Release in Marine Recreational Fisheries, Virginia Beach Resort and Conference Center, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

12/6 & 7:

ACCSP Operations Committee, BWI Comfort Inn, Baltimore, Maryland.

12/12 - 14:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Atlantic City on the Boardwalk, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Year 2000

1/19 & 20:

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Tara, Danvers, Massachusetts.

1/25 - 27:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia.

1/27 - 30:

Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association Annual Weekend and Trade Show, Tara Hyannis Hotel and Resort, Hyannis, Massachusetts.

2/7 - 10:

ASMFC Meeting Week, Old Town Alexandria, Virginia.

3/2 - 4:

Maine Fishermen's Forum, Samoset Resort, Rockport, Maine.

3/6 - 10:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, location to be determined.

"Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away . . ."

Yesterday? Well, yesterday the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission concluded its 58th Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut. And in the evening, waiting at the airport for a plane that was late because a bird had been sucked into one of the engines, I could not escape the sense that this week had gone much too quickly. And yet, there are a few impressions from the week that endure clearly through the blur that surrounds them.

One common thread that ran throughout the week was the need to seriously reexamine how we do business. It is no wonder that fishermen get frustrated watching government bodies make decisions, when those around the table are so frustrated themselves. What we do cannot continue to take as long as it does, or be so unfocused. We know that we can do better, and we must.

Another obvious theme was the need for priorities. Many really important issues for the states did not get the attention that they deserved because of a lack of time. But the issue is not really a lack of time as much as how we allocate the limited time we have. The Commissioners are seeing a trend that is affecting government everywhere. The people we serve are better informed and have better access to the process than ever before. So government agencies are being faced with greater demands; and the people rightly all expect us to be responsive. The ongoing challenge is to find the balance between the number of issues that we want to address, and the number of issues that we can address well.

One of the enduring highlights of the 58th Annual Meeting will be the technical workshops for Commissioners on stock assessment methods and bluefish. Legislators, Governors' Appointees and fishermen must often roll their eyes at the technical concepts that enter invariably into the Commission's dis-

cussions. We opened a dialogue on how scientists do their jobs by focusing on what they have to work with – the basic data that can be analyzed. More of this will be done in the future so that Commissioners and the public will have a better appreciation of all of the factors that affect their decisions. The bluefish workshop addressed a significant research investment by Congress that deals with some of the most important ongoing fisheries conservation issues that we face. As bluefish come back on our fisheries management radar screens, this information will be invaluable. The best decision maker, is an informed decision maker.

And as you might expect, the honor of making the presentation of the Captain David H. Hart Award to Gordon Colvin was a special highlight for me. Perhaps what sticks in my mind most is what Gordon said at an earlier Striped Bass Management Board meeting, prior to winning the award. Gordon said, "Look. There needs to be something that starts tomorrow that brings all of us together to develop a consensus on the continuing opportunities to fish for striped bass. 'All of us' includes more than just Board members, it includes stakeholders." There is so much wisdom and experience embodied in just those two sentences. We should all admire and endeavor to emulate his selfless commitment.

Thus the "take home" message from the 58th Annual Meeting is that the states have issues that they continue to address cooperatively; and success that they are committed to building upon.

ASMFC Approves American Eel Fishery Management Plan: *Plan's Cornerstone is Data Collection*

On November 4, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission unanimously approved the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for American Eel. Since so little is known about the American eel resource, the plan focuses primarily on increasing the states' efforts to collect data on the resource and the fishery it supports. Such efforts include both fishery dependent and independent activities.

According to Dr. Lance Stewart, American Eel Board Chair, "This plan is the culmination of four years of hard work by fisheries managers, scientists and fishermen along the Atlantic coast. It represents an important first step in furthering our understanding of the American eel – its life history, habitat needs, and recreational and commercial fisheries needs."

American eel occupies and is exploited in fresh, brackish, and coastal waters in the Atlantic from the southern tip of Greenland to northeastern South America. The abundance of this species declined from historic levels but remained relatively stable until the 1970s. More recently, fishermen, fisheries managers, and scientists have expressed concern about further declines in abundance. Harvest pressures and habitat losses have been identified as the primary causes of these declines.

The FMP seeks to improve knowledge of eel utilization at all life stages, to protect and enhance American eel abundance in all watersheds where eel now occur, to restore American eel to historic waters, and provide adequate forage for natural predators, as well as support ecosystem health and food chain structure. To achieve these objectives, the FMP has established a number of new management regulations.

The management plan requires states to perform an annual young-of-the-year survey. The deadline for states to submit their monitoring proposals will be May 1, 2000. This will give each state a year in which to assess the gear types, locations (two locations are required per state), and timing (must occur over a six week period) appropriate for the survey. Initially, states

with minimal fisheries will be required to conduct the annual young-of-the-year survey by the year 2001.

In addition, all states are required to submit an annual report to the Commission detailing state regulations, catch, harvest, bycatch, fishery dependent and independent surveys, and characterization of other losses for American eel. To obtain this information states are required to institute licensing and reporting mechanisms. The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, once fully operational, will also seek to organize and collect this data.

Commercial regulations specify that states will maintain their existing fishery regulations. However, a state reserves the right to act more conservatively if they so choose. Recreational fisheries management measures require states/jurisdictions to establish uniform possession limits with a minimum of a six-inch size limit. Recreational anglers may not possess more than 50 eels per person, including crew members involved in party / charter (for-hire) employment for bait purposes during fishing.

In addition, the FMP stresses the need to work toward the conservation and restoration of American eel habitat. Identification and protection of existing eel habitat, as well as restoration of historic habitat, is addressed by incorporating recommendations relative to upstream and downstream passage and habitat monitoring into the plan.

Copies of the plan can be obtained by either contacting Jeanette Braxton, Administrative Assistant, at (202) 289-6400, or via the Commission's webpage on its NEWS page at: <http://www.asmfc.org>. For more information, please contact Heather Stirratt, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 301.



Horseshoe Crab Management Board Fast Tracks Regulatory Action: *Addendum to Address 2000 Coastal Cap on Commercial Bait Fishery*

On November 3, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Horseshoe Crab Management Board approved the development of an addendum to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Horseshoe Crab, which would implement a coastwide landings cap for the commercial bait fishery for horseshoe crab. The addendum is slated for approval by the Management Board in February 2000 and will be implemented by the states prior to the beginning of the 2000 fishing season, which typically begins in May.

Horseshoe crabs are utilized as the primary bait source for commercial conch and eel fisheries along the Atlantic coast. It is also an important resource for the biomedical industry that produces a by-product of the horseshoe crab's blood to detect contaminants in injectable drugs and implantable medical devices. Since the early 1990s, there has been growing concern among fisheries managers, scientists, fisherman and the conservation community regarding the increase in horseshoe crab landings and the potential impact that this may have on both the horseshoe crab resource and hemispheric migratory shorebird populations. Horseshoe crab eggs are an important food source for migratory shorebirds, which use the Delaware Bay area as a primary staging ground during their spring migration from South America to Arctic breeding grounds.

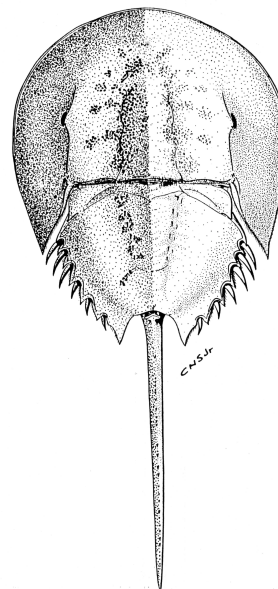
"The challenge in management of this important resource is to develop a management program that will meet the needs of all users of the resource – fisherman, scientists, conservationists and migratory birds alike," stated Bruce Freeman, Board Chair. He continued by stating that "We are further challenged by the lack of sufficient data to accurately assess the status of the population and the implications that our management actions will have on the resource users and migratory shorebirds. Because of this, the Management Board is committed to implementing a risk-adverse approach to managing this species."

The FMP, which was approved in October 1998, called for the development of a coastwide cap on landings for the commercial bait fishery to be implemented in the year 2000. Based on input from the Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel, Technical Committee, Plan Review Team and the conservation community, the Management Board developed a suite of management strategies to cap commercial bait landings. These options will be incorporated into a Public Information Document, which will be available for public review in December 1999, and will be presented at state public hearings in January 2000. Public Com-

ments will be compiled and presented to the Management Board for action in early February.

Recognizing that a coastwide cap would not be implemented until the spring of 2000, the Commission convened an Alternative Bait/Trap Design Workshop in early October to begin a dialogue amongst fisherman, scientists and others toward the identification of successful strategies that fisherman can employ to reduce their dependence on horseshoe crab for bait. The Workshop produced several promising strategies, one of which was the use of bait bags in the conch fishery. Fisherman from Massachusetts, New York and Delaware have been able to reduce their bait needs by approximately 50 percent with the use of these bait bags. To offer some immediate protection to the horseshoe crab resource, the members of the Management Board have agreed to promote the use of bait bags in their conch fisheries without delay.

The Public Information Document will be available in December. Copies can be obtained by either contacting Jeanette Braxton, Administrative Assistant, at (202) 289-6400 or via the Commission's webpage on its Public Input page at <http://www.asmfc.org>. For more information, please contact Thomas O'Connell, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (410) 260-8271 or toconnell@dnr.state.md.us.



Horseshoe crab artwork courtesy of Dr. Carl Shuster, Jr., College of William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

Gordon C. Colvin Receives Prestigious David H. Hart Award (continued from page 1)

Mr. Dunnigan added to his commendation, "Gordon is definitely a 'Big Picture' guy. He is, in fact, one of the great strategic thinkers in our family. During his years as Chair of the Commission, Gordon and I had the opportunity to talk often about the Commission and where its rapidly expanding program was going. Gordon was the one who insisted that as the Commission's influence became more significant, we had to keep emphasizing the role of the states; and that the Commission did not exist for its own purposes, but rather to serve its state members. Gordon was Vice-chair and then Chair during the early years of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, when we first struggled with trying to define the role of the Commission in this expanded world of cooperative fisheries management. More than anyone, he defined the vision of what we could become."

The Commission instituted the "Captain David H. Hart Award" in 1991 to recognize individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the betterment of marine fisheries on the Atlantic coast. The award is named for the Commission's oldest and longest-serving member, a Governor's Appointee from New Jersey who was dedicated to the advancement and protection of marine fishery resources. Past recipients of the award are: Irwin M Alperin, longtime Executive Director of the Commission; Representative Walter B. Jones of North Carolina; Dr. Edwin B. Joseph with South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources; Richard H. Schaefer, Chief of Staff for Intergovernmental and Recreational Fisheries of the National Marine Fisheries Service; David G. Deuel of the National Marine Fisheries Service; Philip



Hart Award Recipient Gordon C. Colvin celebrates with his wife, Phyllis, and son, Matthew.

G. Coates, Director of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries; David M. Cupka of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources; and Sergeant Robert A. Babula, Conservation Officer with the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department.

For more information regarding the David H. Hart Award, please contact Laura Leach, Director of Finance and Administration, at (202)289-6400, ext. 306.

State Shad & River Herring Fishing Recovery Plans Approved

The Shad and River Herring Management Board met on November 2, 1999 to discuss the Plan Review Team's (PRT) report on annual state compliance, and the Technical Committee's recommendations relative to approval of state fishing recovery plans. The Management Board decided to allow the State of South Carolina more time to comply with the recreational creel limit stipulated in Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Shad and River Herring. However, the Management Board stated that if South Carolina did not comply by the January 1, 2000 deadline, that they would concur with the PRT's recommendation to find the State out of compliance. In addition, the Technical Committee made recommendations for approval of state fishing recovery plans. All state plans, except Rhode Island, Virginia, and Delaware were

approved. Virginia and Delaware were afforded a conditional approval with the understanding that they will address the ocean tagging program in detail by December 15, 1999. Rhode Island was granted an exemption from the requirement to tag shad in the ocean intercept fishery for a period of one year. In accordance with the tagging discussion, the Management Board referred an alternative to tagging to the Technical Committee to review and consider for a pilot program in the year 2001. Aside from the tagging discussion, the Management Board directed staff to prepare a technical addendum to the FMP to address a number of editorial corrections within the plan. For more information, please contact Heather Stirratt, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 301.

Northern Shrimp Section Reduces the 1999/2000 Season to 51 Days; Initiation of Plan Amendment to Begin in 2000

On October 28, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section took a major step to provide additional conservation for the severely reduced stock of northern shrimp by limiting the amount of available fishing days to 51. In addition, the Section recommended that the Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) be amended in response to changes in the resource.

The Section decided to reduce by 43 percent the available days for northern shrimp fishing in the year 2000. The season will begin on January 17 and end on March 15, with no fishing on Sundays. The season was shortened to 28 percent of a full season in order to protect egg-bearing females and the 1996 year class, which are the only notable shrimp in the current biomass. This reduction was taken based on the findings of the most recent stock assessment, which indicates that stock size, harvestable biomass and recruitment indices are at very low levels.

The northern shrimp resource is subject to natural fluctuations. For the past four years it has been recognized that poor recruitment in the northern shrimp resource would lead to trouble in the fishery. The number of days available to the fishery had been reduced each year since 1996, culminating in a 90-day season in 1999 (50 percent of a full season). While the 1999 fishing season represented a 15 percent reduction in fishing days from 1998, landings were reduced by 64 percent. The recent stock assessment indicates that the resource is falling even further, and that greater conservation is needed.

The Section's action followed consideration of public comment and the recommendations of the Technical Committee and Advisory Panel. The Technical Committee recommended a closed season in order to protect the 1996 year class from any further reductions. According to this year's stock assessment report, the 1996 year class represents "the only significant source of potential recruitment to future winter fisheries." In addition, the stock is at a very low level of abundance and biomass is continuing to decline. During the last four years, the fishing mortality rates have been considerably above the 11-year average, which is considered a sustainable level of harvest.

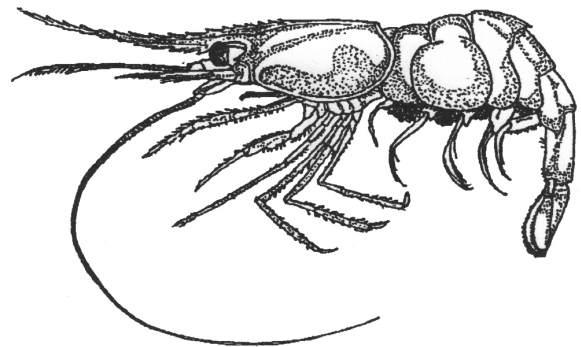
The Advisory Panel, which met on October 19, recommended an 87-day season based on the preliminary stock assessment, experience from the 1998/1999 fishing season and predictions of effort and market conditions for the 1999/2000 season. The Advisory Panel, however, did not have the benefit of reviewing the recommendations of the Technical Committee upon making its recommendation. Even in the absence of this important information, the advisors struggled to develop a recommendation that would both protect the 1996 year class, while allow-

ing for a limited fishing season. The industry recommended taking some significant cuts. For example, despite the high landings that would accrue in December, the advisors recommended opening the fishery in mid-January in order to protect the egg-bearing females – the most vulnerable portion of the resource.

The Northern Shrimp Section was faced with a difficult decision with such disparate recommendations. Jill Goldthwait, Chair, spoke on behalf of the Section, "The Northern Shrimp Section recognizes the vital role Technical Committee and Advisory Panel play, and values the dedicated work and time they devote to shrimp management; the Section's work toward finding a compromise between their positions reflects our faith in the sincere efforts of both these groups. Given the size of the discrepancy between their recommendations, it was not easy for the Section to find an appropriate compromise that recognized both the protection of the resource and the economic interests of the industry."

According to Commissioner Phil Coates, "The decision to limit the fishery this winter to two months was not an easy one, but the resource is at a critically low level. The Section must take the necessary action now in order to prevent history from repeating itself and ensure the long-term health and viability of the resource."

The Shrimp Section took another positive step towards providing greater conservation of the resource by voting to begin an amendment to the fishery management plan (FMP) beginning in 2000. The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by the States of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section. The cooperative management program has been in place since 1972. The current FMP was approved by the Section in 1986 and provides limited tools for managing the resource – season length and gear type. An amendment will



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ISFMP Policy Board Amends Its Charter

The Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board met on November 4, 1999 to review suggested amendments to the ISFMP Charter as proposed by the Commission's Administrative Oversight Committee (AOC). At issue were three primary areas of concern: state delegation caucus voting, membership of the Menhaden Board, and technical amendments to the Charter.

Over the past year, the Commission has been participating in a pilot program at the request of the Legislators and Governors' Appointees (LGAs) aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of participation of the LGAs. The program, known as the caucus voting system, allows the three Commissioners of a state to serve jointly as a state delegation on ISFMP species management boards. When voting, the state delegation caucuses to determine the appropriate position for the state. In the event of disagreement, a null vote is in order.

When the ISFMP Policy Board met on November 4, 1999, it adopted the caucus voting system as it was included in a ISFMP Charter amendment package forwarded by the AOC. The Policy Board heard concerns from the LGA representatives concerning a proposal to have the appointing authorities (in many cases a governor or a state legislature) approve a proxy designation and agreed to strike this provision. Additionally, the AOC removed language which would have required proxies to come "from the same state, jurisdiction or agency" as the delegating Commissioner prior to presentation to the Policy Board.

In the course of its discussions on changes to the Charter, the Policy Board reviewed the language that specifies the current composition of the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board. A motion was offered to remove this special language from the Charter but failed following a discussion of the actions that the Menhaden Board had taken earlier in the week. Specifically, it was pointed out that the Menhaden Board had taken steps to reorganize its composition and structure that would be a part of Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Policy Board plans to revisit this issue in the spring.

The Policy Board also approved the addition of Technical Addenda to the Management Program Elements listed in the ISFMP Charter. The impetus for development of the Technical Addenda component of the Charter arose out of discussions by the Shad and River Herring Management Board regarding necessary editorial changes to Amendment 1 to the Interstate FMP for Shad and River Herring. This addition will allow the Management Board to make technical corrections to an approved FMP, amendment, or addendum without the use of the public review process.

For more information, please contact Dieter Busch, ISFMP Director, at (202) 289-6400.

LGAs Support Charter Amendments at Annual Meeting

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Legislators and Governors' Appointees (LGAs) met on November 3, 1999 to review proposed amendments to the Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Charter and to elect officers for the upcoming year.

The LGAs reviewed with interest the proposed recommendations of the Administrative Oversight Committee (AOC) regarding changes to the ISFMP Charter. The LGAs supported the AOC proposal to formally amend the charter to establish the caucus voting of all three Commissioners of a state delegation serving jointly on species management boards. Of particular interest was language requiring Commissioners to gain consent from appointing authorities when delegating proxies, and that proxies must be from the same "state, jurisdiction or agency" of the Commissioner. The ISFMP Policy Board agreed with the LGAs in opposing these provisions before final passage of the amendments. Though the LGAs discussed the amendments concerning proposed changes to the membership of the Menhaden Board, they agreed that LGAs had previously commented on their desire that the Board reflect the membership of the other management boards.

The LGAs also discussed events of the Advisory Committee that met during the Annual Meeting. The Commission did express interest in working with the advisors in an effort to improve the advisory process. The LGAs hope to meet with the advisors during the February 2000 Commission meeting week.

The LGAs expressed appreciation to the Commission staff that the 2000 Annual Meeting is not scheduled to occur on Election Day. Further, they urged the Commission to not schedule the Annual Meeting within three weeks prior or two weeks after Election Day to accommodate the legislative commissioners particularly, a third of the Commissioners.

Special mention was made at the passing of longtime statesman Senator John Chafee. The LGAs were pleased that the Commission plans to recognize his achievements in fisheries and natural resources management next year.

Before adjournment, the legislators reelected Senator Jill Goldthwait (Maine) as Chair and Representative Dennis Abbott as Vice-chair, while the Governors' Appointees elected Mr. Damon Tatem (North Carolina) as Chair and Mr. William Goldsborough (Maryland) as Vice-chair. For more information, please contact Lori Goodwin, Special Assistant, at (202)289-6400, ext. 314.

ASMFC Approves State Striped Bass Management Proposals for 2000: *Delaware, Maryland, Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia, and North Carolina Proposals Approved*

On November 1, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Striped Bass Management Board approved the year 2000 striped bass management proposals for Delaware, Maryland, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, Virginia, and North Carolina. The approved programs implement at least a 14 percent reduction in fishing mortality on age 8 and older fish, as specified by Addendum IV to Amendment 5 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass.

Addendum IV, which was approved in early October, was developed to address concerns raised by the most recent stock assessment that indicated that the fishing mortality on striped bass exceeded the target established in Amendment 5. Specifically, the fishing mortality on age 8 and older fish was in excess of the overfishing definition. As such, Addendum IV calls for all states and jurisdictions to reduce fishing mortality on older fish by 14 percent.

Recent action was taken by the aforementioned states since their fisheries began in early January and their management programs need to be in place by January 1, 2000. The remaining states' proposals will be reviewed at a subsequent Management Board meeting to be held in February of 2000.

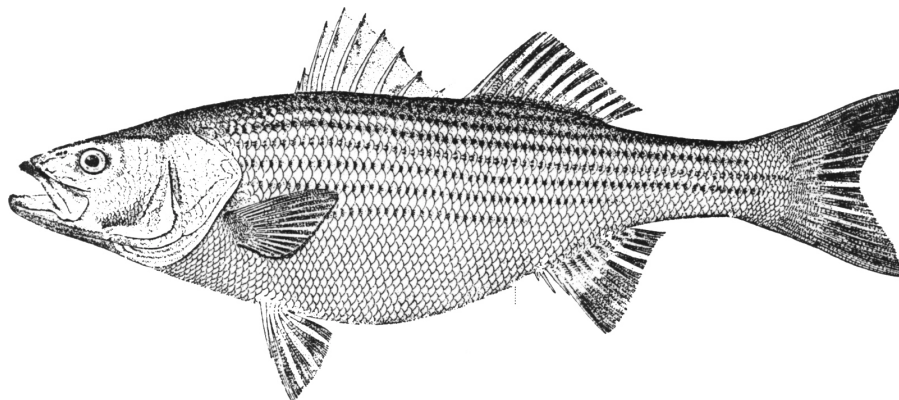
"I am pleased that the Board has been able to respond so quickly to the concerns raised by the recent stock assessment. The Board

is fully committed to ensuring the proper management of the Atlantic coast striped bass and these actions begin to address that commitment," stated John Nelson, Board Chair.

The Board also reiterated its commitment to developing an amendment during the year 2000 to ensure equity among user groups and the continued health of the striped bass resource. The amendment is scheduled to be approved at the Commission's Annual Meeting in October of year 2000, with implementation in year 2001.

The Board's final action during this meeting was to increase the striped bass quota in the Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River based on information that the striped bass stock in these waters has increased sufficiently to support this increase. Tagging studies indicate that the Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River striped bass stock does not contribute to the coastal migratory striped bass stock, and is therefore not subject to the same reductions in fishing mortality. Additionally, tagging studies will continue to examine migration patterns into the Albemarle.

Copies of Addendum IV can be obtained either by contacting Jeanette Braxton, Administrative Assistant, at (202) 289-6400, or via the Commission's webpage on its NEWS page at www.asmfc.org. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 318.



Fishing Tournament Lands Big One\$ in Support of Connecticut's Aquatic Resources Education Program

The Eighth Annual Laura Leach Invitational Fishing Tournament was again successful in its goal of surpassing funds raised the previous year to support children's fishing activities in the host state. At least \$1,710 was raised this year, and all of this money will go to help support the Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education Program.

Grateful appreciation is extended to all that entered the tournament – Most folks entered the tournament even though they knew that they would not have an opportunity to fish, and several people purchased tee-shirts for their friends and family back home.

Very few folks fished this year – too much work to do! Those who did participate in the tournament fished early in the morning, late at night, in inclement weather— in other words, they wanted to fish! The tournament was definitely a success, despite only a few people fishing, thanks to the expert organizing by Rod MacLeod of Connecticut DEP, Fisheries Division. Thanks especially to the tournament sponsors: John Johnson of Essex Machine Works, Mark Lewchick, Penn Fishing Tackle Company, Southern Connecticut Tackle Company and Water



Gremlin Company. It is because of the generosity of these individuals and companies that we are able to give 100 percent of the tournament entry fee to charity each year.

Congratulations to the winners of this year's tournament -- Brian Culhane of New York for catching the largest hickory shad (18") and to Pat Augustine, also of New York, for catching the most fish (22 hickory shad). A prize was awarded in a new category this year – "Best Fish Story". The winners were Joe and Eileen Setzler-Hamilton (see related article on page 13 entitled, "A Connecticut Saga, or Ode to the Laura Leach Fishing Tournament").

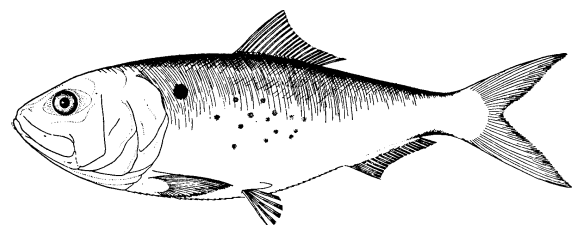
Russ Nelson guaranteed that many more fish will be caught next year in Florida! Let's hope that the fish cooperate with him. ☺

Atlantic Menhaden Management Board Takes Initial Steps to Reorganize & Approves Options to Include in Draft Amendment 1

The Atlantic Menhaden Management Board has recommended changing its current composition to reflect the structure of the Commission's other species management boards upon adoption of Amendment 1. The Menhaden Board met on November 1, 1999 to review the public comments submitted as a result of the Board's decision to amend the existing Menhaden Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The majority of comments voiced at public hearings, and those submitted in writing and through e-mail, urged the Board to take steps to reorganize its current mixed industry/fisheries manager composition and also the technical and advisory committees that advise the Board.

Based on the Board's deliberations at this meeting and the public comment record, the Menhaden Plan Development Team (PDT) will begin to develop a draft Amendment 1. The Board adopted the full outline of topics to be considered through Amendment 1 that was included in the Public Information

Document (PID) with some minor revisions, and instructed the PDT to begin developing options for the Board to consider at its next meeting, tentatively scheduled for February of 2000. For more information please contact: Dr. Joseph Desfosse, Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 329.



Tautog Management Board Approves Addendum II: *Fishing Mortality Rate Deduction Delayed Until April 1, 2002*

On November 1, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (Commission) Tautog Management Board approved Addendum II to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Tautog. Addendum II delays the implementation of the next reduction in fishing mortality until April 1, 2002 and initiates the process of the next amendment or addendum to the FMP.

Addendum I to the FMP for Tautog required all states to implement management measures to achieve a fishing mortality rate of 0.24 by April 1, 1998. Additionally, Addendum I required all states to implement management measures to achieve a fishing mortality rate of 0.15 by April 1, 2000.

Addendum II delays the compliance schedule contained in Addendum I by extending the deadline for the states to achieve the fishing mortality target of 0.15 until April 1, 2002. This delay will allow the states additional time to collect data to more completely evaluate the effects of current regulations and determine the extent of reduction that will need to be made by the states to meet the F=0.15 target. The Management Board determined that the regulations that are currently in place have reduced landings and effort to adequately protect the tautog resource.

Addendum II includes a series of issues that will be addressed in the next amendment or addendum. During the last year, the Management Board and the Technical Committee have found that the FMP provides the states limited flexibility in developing management programs. This limited flexibility makes it difficult for the states to implement management programs that meet both the goals of the management plan and the needs of the fishing public. Therefore, Addendum II details a series of issues to be considered for possible inclusion in the next addendum or amendment to increase the flexibility afforded to the states to meet the targets within the Plan. The development of the amendment or addendum will occur during the next two years and public input will be sought throughout the process.

A copy of Addendum II can be obtained by either contacting Jeanette Braxton, Administrative Assistant, at the Commission at (202) 289-6400, or via the Commission webpage under its NEWS page at www.asmf.org.

For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400.

ASMFC Finds Rhode Island Out of Compliance with Tautog FMP

On November 4, 1999, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission determined that the State of Rhode Island is out of compliance with the Commission's Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Tautog. This action was based on the Tautog Management Board's determination that Rhode Island has not implemented the required bag limit for the recreational fishery, and was unable to demonstrate that its alternative management program achieves the fishing mortality target established by the FMP.

Since 1998, Rhode Island has managed its recreational fisheries through differential bag limits. Specifically, anglers aboard party and charter boats may possess one legal-sized tautog from January 1 through October 15, and 12 legal-sized tautog for the remainder of the year. All other recreational fishermen are restricted to a four fish bag limit year-round.

The Tautog FMP provides specific management alternatives that may be implemented by the states in order to meet the goals and objectives of the plan. The FMP provides recreational

management options that include bag and seasonal limits that are consistent across all recreational modes (i.e. the FMP does not address differential management measures). The plan also provides the opportunity for states to implement alternative management programs under adaptive management. These programs must be reviewed and approved by the Tautog Technical Committee and Management Board to ensure that they meet the fishing mortality targets contained in the FMP. It is the state's burden to show that its alternative plan will provide equivalent conservation.

Upon reviewing Rhode Island's quantitative analysis supporting its management program, the Technical Committee found that there was insufficient information to determine whether or not the program achieved the required fishing mortality target of the plan. The FMP specifies a fishing mortality rate of 0.24, which, given the current level of data, is difficult to evaluate on a state-specific basis.

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Legislative Committee Meets at Annual Meeting

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Legislative Committee met on October 31, 1999 to review relevant federal legislation and legislative policy issues. The Committee reviewed federal legislation introduced since the Committee last met during the 1999 Spring Meeting. The Committee recommended that the Commission maintain current and past positions on a number of issues including: outer continental shelf oil and gas revenue sharing; moratorium on herring and mackerel harvest by large vessels; development of a national ocean policy; and establishing an estuary habitat restoration program. The Committee recommended strong language supporting the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) request for federal funding of construction of one fisheries research vessel per year for the next several years. The Committee recommends that NOAA proposes and that Congress funds a total of six new fisheries research vessels. The Committee also supported attempts to improve food safety, but did not contend that these activities be consolidated in a single federal agency, as currently proposed in federal legislation.

The Committee reviewed the conference report to fund the Commerce Department for fiscal year 2000 (FY 2000). The

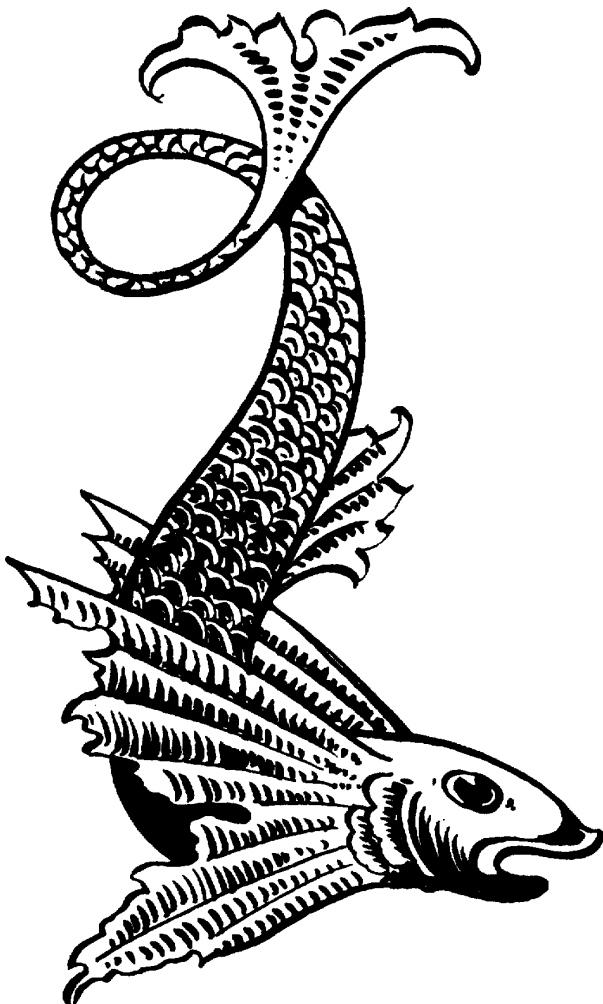
conference report includes: minor or no change in funding for most programs of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). In this vein, the NOAA State and Industry Grants, including the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, and Anadromous Fisheries Act grants were level funded. Further, there was no change in funding for the three interstate marine fisheries commissions.

A few NMFS programs would receive more funding under the report including: a nine million increase in fisheries management base programs, a six million increase in New England fisheries management, and a \$4.5 million bump up for endangered species recovery efforts. Additionally, the bill includes funding for one new fisheries research vessel, as discussed earlier. Funding for the Northeast Marine Fisheries Initiative program would decrease by 50 percent in the bill, and there would be a total of four million for right whale research.

The report also includes directives that NMFS should coordinate data collection techniques regionally, preferably through the interstate marine fisheries commissions. Additionally, NMFS is directed to develop catch data standards and the means for using it. NMFS is directed to collaborate groundfish research and long-term management rebuilding efforts with the New England Fishery Management Council, and affected stakeholders. Finally, NMFS is also directed to study and report to Congress on the options for funding a West Coast observer program, including a comparison of current spending on the West and East Coasts.

The Committee was briefed on timely investigations into the activities of the Federal Aid Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service regarding Wallop/Breaux or Sportfish Restoration Funds. The Resources Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives has conducted hearings into the matter based on reports of the Government Accounting Office on these issues. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has addressed the three areas of concern in the report in the following manner: (1) questionable travel authorizations – additional scrutiny will be employed in authorizing travel; (2) accounting errors – the agency will continue to enact accounting reforms and identify unaccounted expenditures by the end of the calendar year; and (3) potential violations of the use of Administrative funds – the Service argues that expenditures under the Director's Discretionary Account and for administrative purposes have been spent within the parameters of the Sportfish Restoration statute. The Committee will monitor these activities closely.

The Commission adopted all the Committee recommendations without amendment on November 4, 1999. For more information, please contact Lori Goodwin, Special Assistant, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 304.



A Connecticut Saga – or An Ode to the Laura Leach Fishing Tournament

*Connecticut coastal areas we did explore,
In an attempt to catch fishes from the shore.*

*Sunday evening at Noank – the setting sun was a beautiful sight.
But, alas, those old hickories had just settled down for the night.*

*Monday morning we hiked Bluff Points' beautiful trails,
In the company of chipmunks, and gray squirrels with bushy tails.*

*An eagle soared overhead – what a sight!
While seagulls climbed to azure-colored heights.*

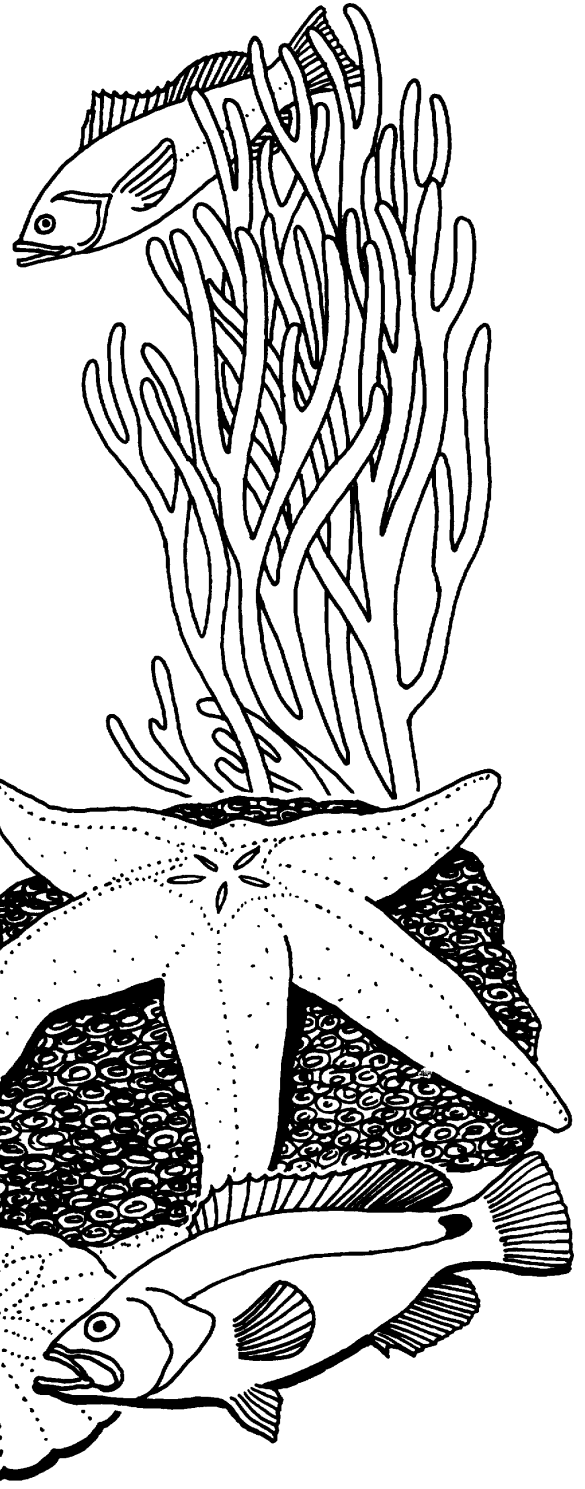
*The fish, however, did not take to our bait.
Instead, their retreat sounded, they departed in haste!*

*Wednesday morning dawned windy, but with a favorable tide,
So with poles in hand, we sought where those fish did abide.*

*We cast lines at Noank, Bluff and Avery Points, to name a few,
But, alas, no fishes in churning waters of stormy hues.*

*Thus ends our saga along Connecticut's coast,
Where all fish swim free – another year to boast!*

*Written by
Joe & Eileen Setzler-Hamilton*



ASMFC Finds Rhode Island Out of Compliance with Tautog FMP (continued from page 11)

The Tautog Management Board first reviewed the Technical Committee findings in early 1999 and advised Rhode Island that if it did not amend its differential bag limit program for its recreational fisheries by October 1, 1999, the State would be found out of compliance with the Tautog FMP. On November 1, the Management Board met and reviewed the current status of the Rhode Island's program, which has remained unchanged. Rhode Island did report, however, that it intends in modifying its regulations to comply with the plan for its 2000 fishery.

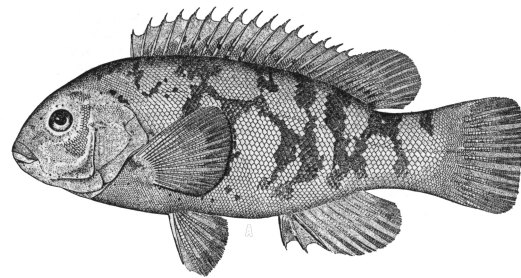
Although the Management Board recognized Rhode Island's efforts to come into compliance for the year 2000, it felt that it was important, as least as a matter of record, to submit its finding of noncompliance to the federal government. Both the Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board and the Commission agreed the Management Board's recommendation of noncompliance on November 4, 1999.

The ISFMP Charter requires the Executive Director to notify the State, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of the Interior of the Commission's determination within ten work-

ing days of the Commission's finding.

Upon receipt of the recommendation, the Secretary of Commerce has 30 days to review the recommendation and take final action, which can include a complete closure of Rhode Island's tautog fisheries. These actions are the result of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, which mandates a cooperative state/federal program to conserve and manage valuable coastal fisheries. It requires the Commission to prepare and adopt fishery management plans (FMPs). It also imposes an obligation on each state covered by the FMP to implement and enforce the FMP's regulations in state waters, or else face the possibility of a federal moratorium on fishing for the affected species in that state.

For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The following are the remarks of Larry Simpson, Executive Director of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, commemorating the Commission's 50th Anniversary at its Annual Meeting in late October.

"Now 50 years are behind us. What does the future hold for the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission? Abraham Lincoln said it best "a house divided against itself can not stand." The meaning we can take from that is – we must be unified in what we do. We have to agree on the broad goals and give those whom are working to accomplish those goals our support. We do not have to have standard actions in all cases, although that is certainly the easiest way, but we must all support the actions which take us to the goals we all agree must be our end-product. We must do things right. We must be diligent to our tasks. We must respect all opinions and users. We must be honest to ourselves and others and seek the truth. Our task in marine science vocation is one, that since time immemorial, is of differing opinions and is many times thankless. We must accept that role and thrive in it. Most excellence is from

self motivation rather than external pressure. That is life. Some of the areas the Commission should address in the future in my mind are continued excellence in providing sound data for decisions. That will occur in improvements to recreational fishing data systems and data collection along with the implementation of a commercial data collection system through the states. Once we have achieved that goal with excellence, I think we should have better integration of fishery independent data into a complete state/federal cooperative data collection effort. I feel we all need to improve the administration of biological and environmental data collection. GIS is a relatively underutilized tool the Commission should explore.

We should be proud of the marine resources we have been given stewardship over in the Gulf of Mexico. Our commercial landings (volume and value), our recreational trips and expenditures, the fisheries habitat both offshore and estuarine demand nothing less than the best. I challenge you all to this high goal to preserve the past – plan for the future in a cooperative effort."

Advisory Committee Reviews Results of Advisor Questionnaire

The Advisory Committee met on November 1, during the Commission's 58th Annual Meeting, to discuss the results of the Advisory Questionnaire and provide recommendations to the Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board for review and possible action.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to begin to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the advisory panel process, and seek ways to improve the process. The Advisory Committee has become increasingly concerned about the process. For some panels, attendance has been its lowest on record. Advisors complain about being disenfranchised from the process. The questionnaire begins to get at the root of the problem.

Summary of Results

The survey was sent to the Commission's 214 advisors this past summer. Of the 214 advisors 86 surveys were returned, representing 103 seats on the various species advisory panels.

All in all, advisors are fairly satisfied with the process, although there are many things that can be done to improve it. The questionnaire identified three major issues/concerns with the advisory panel process: (1) the need for greater communication among all stakeholders, (2) a more thorough and thoughtful meeting planning process, and (3) a more thorough orientation of advisors about their roles and responsibilities.

The Need for Greater Communication

Advisors desire greater communication with both the management board and technical committee. Advisors want to stay well informed about their species of interest. Specifically, they want to receive a constant flow of information regarding the status of the fishery, and would like to meet more often, even for those species for which there is no significant action within a given year. For example, some advisory panels have not met in over four years. As a result of these findings, the Advisory Committee recommended to the ISFMP Policy Board that all advisory panels meet at least annually to ensure continued involvement by all advisors in the process.

When asked what the worst or most objectionable part of the process is, over half the respondents (51%) cited the overall lack of consideration and respect given to the advisors by the management boards. Many stated in their responses that the management boards seem to have already made up their minds prior to seeking advisory input. These beliefs have led many respondents to state that they feel a "sense of hopelessness" in the process. At a minimum, advisors want to feel that board members listen to what they have to say – that their views are heard and their recommendations given due consideration. Respondents believe that their experiences and contributions are worth consideration. They commit valuable time and forgo in-

come to participate in the process; the least the managers could do is listen to what they have to say.

When asked what could be done to help rectify the feeling of disenfranchisement, the overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) stated that they believe that the management board should be required to explain why it did or did not incorporate the recommendations from the technical committee and advisory panel into its actions.

As such the Advisory Committee made the following recommendation to the ISFMP Policy Board: "Request that the Management Boards prepare a response to the advisory panel as to why the Management Board did not follow the recommendations of the Advisory Panel and Technical Committee." In its report to the ISFMP Policy Board, the Advisory Committee acknowledged a variety of mechanisms to communicate board actions to the panels, and is willing to explore these various options to see what works best for all involved.

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ACCSP Coordinating Council Makes 2000 Funding Decisions

In conjunction with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's 58th Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Coordinating Council met on November 4, 1999. Several issues were decided, including recommendations for funding partner proposals in the year 2000 funding cycle. These recommendations were forwarded by the ACCSP Operations Committee after careful consideration of 24 projects submitted by both partner agencies and standing committees. The Coordinating Council approved the following projects for 2000 funding cycle (title followed by submitting entity):

Coastwide IVR - NMFS Northeast Region

The established NMFS Northeast Region system will be expanded to cover quota-managed species coastwide, including the needs of state partners. This project will serve as a model of the non-duplicative goal of the ACCSP.

ACCSP Administrative

The administrative budget includes salaries for three full-time staff, committee/subcommittee/workgroup meeting costs, and printing costs. Also included were funds for three regional implementation meetings during the year 2000.

Socioeconomic Pilot Study (Year 2) - NMFS Northeast Region and the State of Georgia

The Coordinating Council approved this pilot at the May 1999 meeting. Project tasks include finalization of the survey instruments and implementation of interviews from summer flounder (Northeast Region) and blue crab (Georgia) harvesters. Data will be key entered and submitted to the ACCSP data management system in approved formats.

ACCSP Data Management

The data management system is scheduled to enter limited production mode during the fourth quarter of 2000. This limited production environment will remain on the NMFS SHARK server during the 2000 funding cycle. These funds would be earmarked for data management contractor services, to include web design and partner assistance.

Implementation of ACCSP Commercial Module - Rhode Island

The proposal will result in ACCSP standard trip level data collection and would allow a Northeast state partner to come on-line. Rhode Island has asked for input from other partners that have implemented commercial trip tickets. A recommended meeting between Rhode Island, the NMFS Northeast Region, ACCSP, and Georgia staffs to facilitate an exchange of ideas, specifically geared to data collection in Rhode Island, will be planned for early 2000.

ACCSP For-hire Pilot Study

This project will serve to discern the best method(s) for collection of information from this important fishery. The Gulf states and the State of Maine have had similar studies in the recent past. The ACCSP pilot is different since it also includes party (head) boats in the design and compares data from an established, *mandatory* logbook program (in South Carolina) with the two other methodologies (Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey charter mode and phone survey of random charter captains to collect effort data).

Dealer Software - NMFS Northeast Region

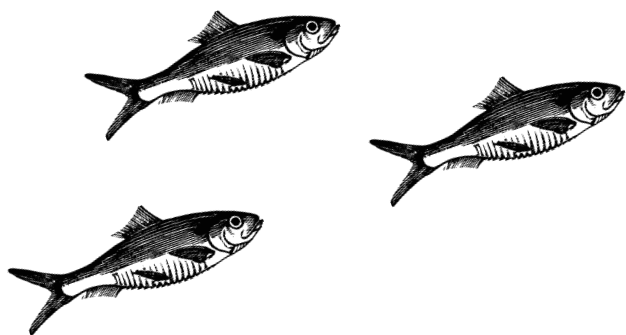
Many seafood dealers would welcome the opportunity to report landings electronically, but do not wish to incur the expense to tailor their existing software to allow for transmission of data directly to the NMFS Northeast Region's port offices. The Region has taken the initiative to identify dealers who may be interested and identify existing software presently in use. This proposal covers dealers from Virginia to Maine. It will decrease reporting burden (paper submission) for many dealers, and since key entry time would be saved, the data would be available for management needs in a more timely manner.

ACCSP Outreach

Since the inception of ACCSP, providing forums for industry and constituents to provide input into the Program has been a high priority. Partner Press Workshops will be utilized as the method to advance the ACCSP Outreach strategies. One such workshop is being planned for Mid-February 2000, with an additional session to be held later in the 2000 calendar year.

Vessel Registration System (VRS) Development - NMFS Headquarters

No current system exists to share vessel registration data among partners/states/agencies on the Atlantic coast. One of the proposed cornerstones of the ACCSP data management system is the future ability to track unique vessels through time and space. This data would be available to link with biological, social, and



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ACCSP Coordinating Council Makes 2000 Funding Decisions (continued from page 16)

economic information, and coupled with catch/landings data, would provide entire trip summary information available for each fishing craft. The ACCSP has agreed to adopt the VRS as a Program standard. This proposal offers coastwide coverage, as mandated by federal legislation, and will result in substantial improvement to current practices. NMFS Headquarters personnel have been in contact with the states of Massachusetts and Virginia, who have agreed to work towards this integration of their systems into the VRS. It is hoped that this initiative will assist the U.S. Coast Guard in their negotiations with the Congress to provide sufficient funding to make the VRS a reality, coastwide.

Incorporation of Trip Ticket Data into the ACCSP Database - North Carolina

The North Carolina commercial trip ticket system represents a major source of trip information and the basis of the ACCSP data collection program. Approximately 275,000 individual trips are processed annually, accounting for an average of 755,000 records. The Operations Committee requested the state

revisit the cost estimate for this component. Inclusion of North Carolina data would nearly complete the South Atlantic commercial reporting systems.

The Coordinating Council also approved the ACCSP Confidentiality Policy. This will allow design of the data management system to move forward. Finally, the Council mandated the Operations Committee to generate a detailed template to assist with the decision of where to house the ACCSP data management system. It is anticipated that the host site selection will be made by the Council early next year.

For more information, please contact either Joseph Moran, ACCSP Program Manager, or Heidi Timer, ACCSP Administrative Assistant, at (202) 289-6400. Specific questions regarding data management issues should be directed to Michael Cahall, ACCSP Information Systems Program Manager, at (301) 713-2328, or by email at mcahall@asmfc.org.

Advisory Committee Reviews Results of Advisor Questionnaire (continued from page 15)

A More Thorough & Thoughtful Meeting Planning Process

A good portion of the questionnaire respondents pointed to problems in meeting planning and the lack of adequate and timely information upon which to base their recommendations as one of the primary problems with the advisory panel process. Specific issues identified with poor meeting planning include: not enough meetings, not enough advance notice or lead time for meetings, insufficient time for each meeting, poor attendance by advisory panel members, and meetings held in remote/difficult to reach locations or outside range of the fishery. Additionally, respondents commented that they do not receive information in enough time to thoroughly review material and provide constructive advice.

When asked how the advisory panel process could be improved, the number one suggestion was for the Commission to implement a more thorough and thoughtful meeting planning process. This includes: forecasting a meeting schedule for each year, with an opportunity for advisory input throughout the entire FMP, amendment or addenda process; providing adequate advance notice of upcoming meetings (at least one month notice); hold meetings in areas that are easily accessible by advisors and within the range of the species, and provide advance

meeting materials in enough time for thoughtful review prior to meeting.

A More Thorough Orientation of Advisors about Their Roles and Responsibilities

The third issue identified by the questionnaire as an issue/concern regards the need for a more thorough orientation of advisors as to their roles and responsibilities, including what they can expect from the process. Many advisors have stated that they don't know what is expected of them. Advisory panel chairs are often unsure of their responsibilities. For example, what is the appropriate time to provide their input to the board? What are the chairs obligations to their respective panels?

To address this issue, the Advisory Committee, working with staff, will draft an advisor primer that outlines the ins and outs of the advisory panel process. What are advisors' roles and responsibilities, and what can they, in turn, expect from the process? Specific duties and expectations of advisory panel chairs will also be explored. The Advisory Committee will be presenting a draft of this primer to the ISFMP Policy Board for its review in the spring. For more information or to obtain a copy of the full survey results, please contact Tina Berger, Public Affairs & Resource Specialist, at (202)289-6400.

Northern Shrimp Section Reduces the 1999/2000 Season to 51 Days; Initiation of Plan Amendment to Begin in 2000 (continued from page 7)

expand the suite of management options to better respond to natural fluctuations in the resource and sustain a healthy resource. The Section's recommendation to initiate a plan amendment was approved by the Interstate Fisheries Management Program Policy Board on November 4 during the Commission's 58th Annual Meeting in Mystic, Connecticut.

Following the meeting Phil Coates stated that, "I'm pleased the Section is moving forward to update one of the Commission's earliest FMPs. The plan amendment will provide greater flexibility to the management process and promote consistency with the ISFMP Charter and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act."

The amendment will define long-term goals and objectives for the fishery. Throughout the plan development process, the public will be provided ample opportunity to provide its input and advice on the future of northern shrimp management. For more information, please contact: Amy Schick, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400, ext. 317.

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